



The President's Daily Brief

17 February 1971

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

17 February 1971

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

More North Vietnamese forces are moving toward the area of Laos where the South Vietnamese are operating. (Page 1)

In northern Laos, there have been only minor clashes in the past two days. (Page 2)

[REDACTED]

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The latest satellite photography shows the highest number of MIG-21s ever seen in Communist China. (Page 4)

[REDACTED]

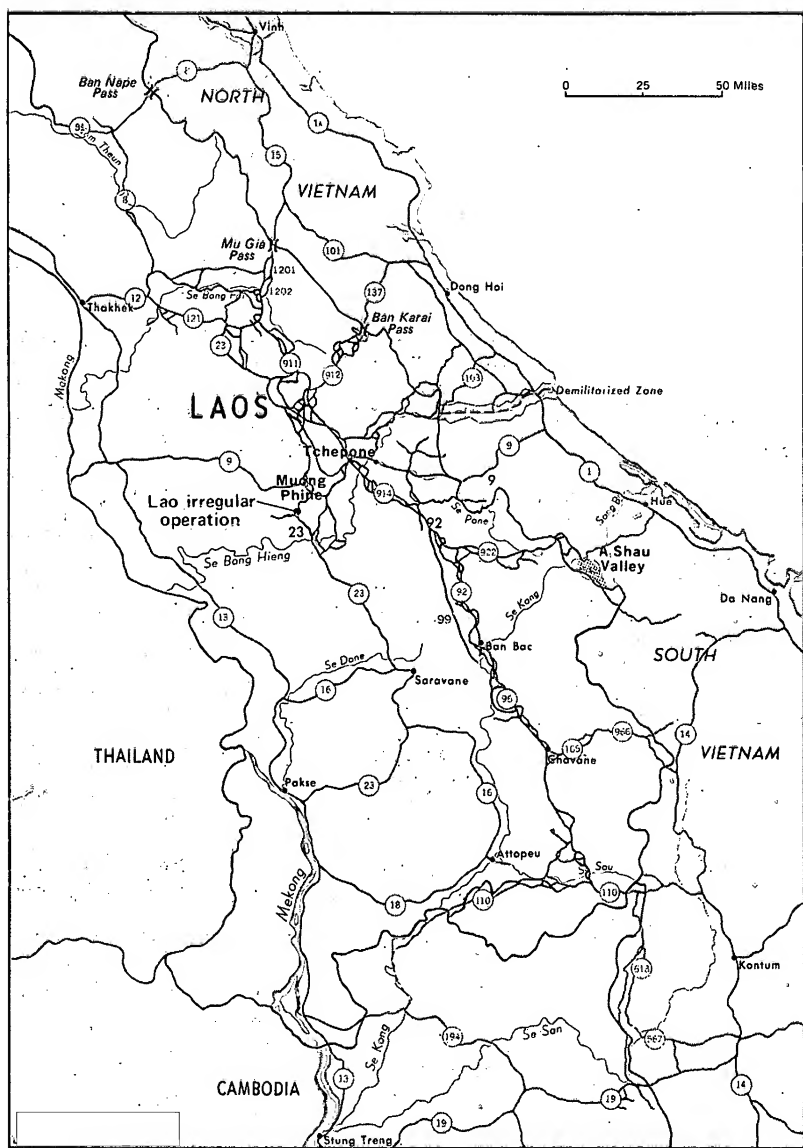
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Tension remains high between India and Pakistan and between East and West Pakistan. (Page 6)

On Page 7, we comment on the decision by Warsaw to rescind the food price increases.

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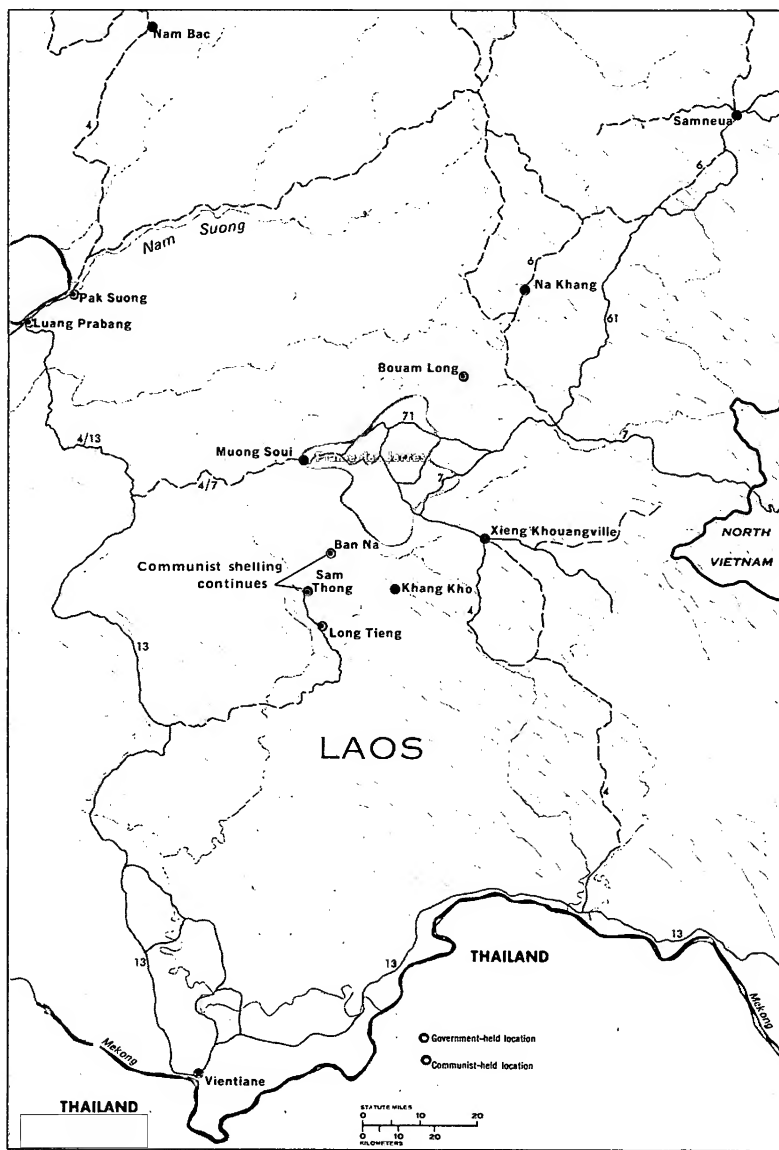
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LAOS-VIETNAM

Additional Communist forces are moving toward the area of the South Vietnamese operation in Laos. North of Route 9, the headquarters of the North Vietnamese 2nd Division has moved to a position just east of Tchepone. The 270th Regiment has shifted westward along the northern edge of the Demilitarized Zone toward the Lao border. South of Route 9, there is evidence that the 29th Regiment has moved from the A Shau Valley into Laos, a move that would put two enemy regiments in positions flanking Route 92.

These continuing movements strongly suggest that the North Vietnamese intend to counter the South Vietnamese thrust into Laos. At the moment, however, contact between South Vietnamese and Communist infantry forces is generally light and sporadic. The enemy is still making heavy use of antiaircraft, mortar, and artillery fire to harass allied rear base areas and South Vietnamese field positions.

The new Lao irregular operation against Communist supply efforts along Route 23 between Muong Phine and the Se Bang Hieng River has so far drawn little enemy reaction. The operation began early yesterday when a four-battalion irregular task force was airlifted into an area about eight miles southwest of Muong Phine.



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LAOS

Only minor clashes and scattered contacts have occurred in the last two days around Long Tieng and Sam Thong, but Communist shelling of Sam Thong and Ban Na is continuing. The 165th Regiment of the North Vietnamese 312th Division, which has been pinning down about 800 troops manning the government base at Ban Na, has now been joined by at least one battalion from its companion 209th Regiment, bringing enemy combat strength there to roughly 2,000. Meanwhile, most of the civilians living in the Long Tieng Valley have been evacuated to smaller villages to the south and west. Press reporting on military and civilian casualties continues to appear exaggerated.

In the Luang Prabang area, the ridge positions northeast of the royal capital that have changed hands several times have been deserted by government paratroops that recently reoccupied them. These troops are now moving back to the city's outskirts.

The paratroops, who do not seem to have been under immediate attack, have been protecting government artillery located nearby at Pak Suong. The artillery will be pulled back each night to a safer site until another security unit can be moved into the area. Elements of the North Vietnamese 335th Independent Regiment are still active in the vicinity.

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NORTH VIETNAM

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COMMUNIST CHINA

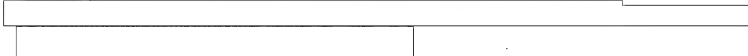
The latest satellite photography shows ten MIG-21s at the Cheng-tu airframe plant. In addition, 24 MIG-21s were at other Chinese airfields.



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Recent photography also shows seven MIG-21s and 12 MIG-21 [redacted] in Albania, the first time this aircraft has been seen there. [redacted]

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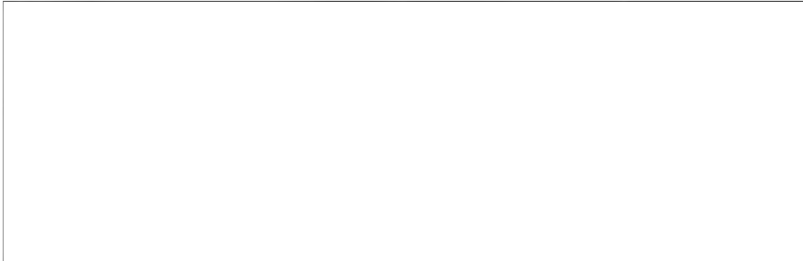
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SOUTH VIETNAM



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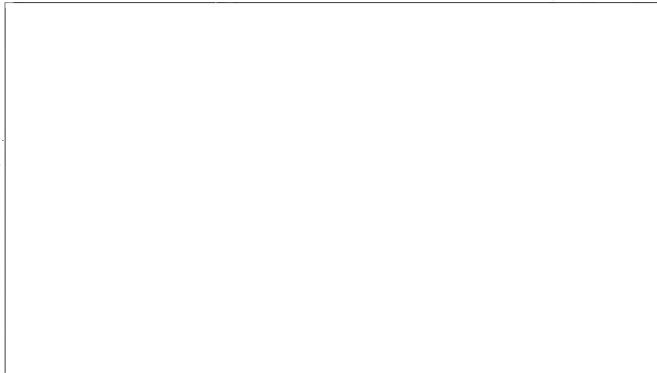
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INDIA-PAKISTAN

Each nation has recalled its high commissioner for consultations over the hijacking and subsequent destruction of an Indian airliner by Kashmiri radicals. Officials in both countries insist that the recall is not permanent. Pakistan remains incensed, however, over New Delhi's ban against all Pakistani flights over India, and Indian media have been critical of Pakistan's attempts to involve third countries in the dispute. Tension remains high although most of the Indian press now concedes that troop movements within East Pakistan are related to domestic politics.

The situation within Pakistan has indeed been further complicated by Z. A. Bhutto's announcement that his Pakistan People's Party will not attend the National Assembly now scheduled to meet on 3 March to begin writing a new constitution. East Pakistan's Awami League will have an absolute majority in the assembly, and Bhutto is concerned that the League will ram its program for provincial autonomy through the assembly sessions.

Bhutto has, in effect, given notice that West Pakistan will not accept a purely East Pakistani constitution, but the League may well refuse to deal with him. It hopes to win enough support from Bhutto's West Pakistani opponents to make it appear that the League's constitution has the support of both sections of the country. Many East Pakistanis would rather split the country than settle for anything less than provincial autonomy, and an apparently growing number would prefer outright independence.

East Pakistan's relationship with India is by no means as hostile as West Pakistan's. India's occupation of Kashmir, for example, does not cause the anguish in East Pakistan that it does in West Pakistan. In addition, East Pakistan enjoys the economic advantage of a brisk bilateral trade with India.

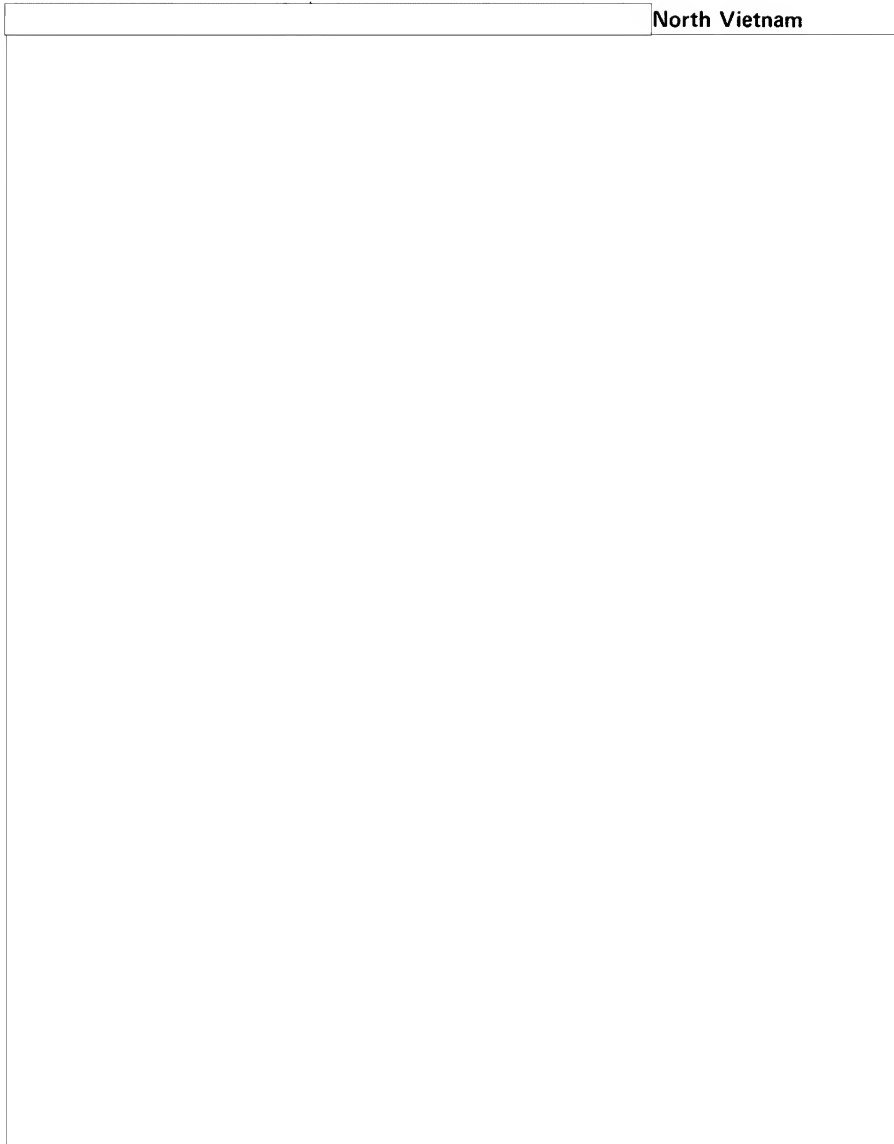
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POLAND

The government's decision to rescind the food price rise constitutes a significant retreat from its previous position that food prices would not be further increased for two years. The price rollback may have been necessary to prevent a third wave of strikes. Although the sit-down strike of textile workers in Lodz was made public, the Polish press has implied that labor unrest has also existed in other industrial centers.

Most of the workers in Lodz have now returned to their jobs, and Premier Jaroszewicz's announcement of the price cut makes it clear that no further concessions can be expected. To reinforce this point he linked the government's ability to rescind the prices with credits from the USSR. Jaroszewicz appears to be attempting to remind the workers that the Soviets always collect their debts.



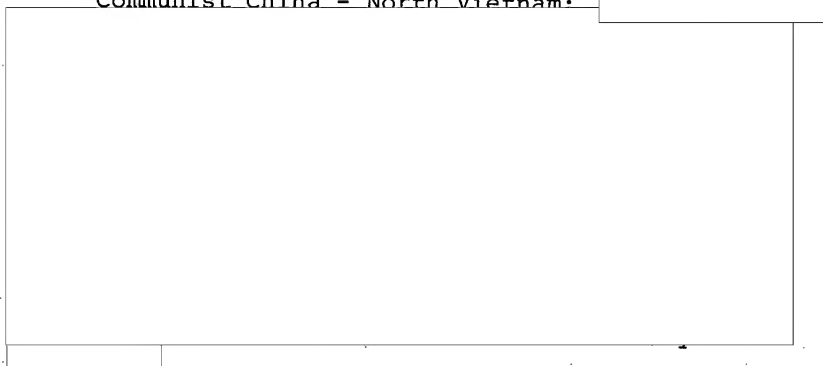
North Vietnam

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NOTE

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